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Emerging Leader Conference 2001, Trip Report

The Emerging Leader Conference was a tremendous self-evaluation, learning and networking opportunity. The week began with a three and half day workshop. The workshop focused on learning about individual leadership styles, personality types and group dynamics.

I first learned that I have an ENTP personality with a telling leadership style, closely followed by a coaching style. I also learned that I am very strong analytically and creatively. This combined with the fact that only ten percent of the population has an ENTP (inventor) personality explains my leadership style and biggest difficulty at work. My biggest difficulty at work is fighting the impression of being a know-it-all. This is hard to do when you are a no-body from Memphis, yet you know that you have had and continue to have national impacts on the Corps and the construction industry. I am fairly successful at fighting this impression locally, but still have some difficulties on a national basis. This is primarily due to the lack of daily contact with people outside of the District. When working with people outside the District there is not much time to ease into a conversation, as a result, I have a tendency to come across rather strong.

It was great hearing about the Learning Organization. In 1998 I wrote an article for the Civil Engineering magazine. I started the article with the following paragraphs:

“Imagine someone who takes four hours to ride his bike back and forth to work every day but, when asked why he doesn’t just learn to drive a car, answers that he doesn’t have to do so. That would take an additional two hours every day for a week, he explains. He would miss the evening news every day.

This kind of thinking reflects a common attitude found among workers. Employees are generally very busy, and don’t feel they have time to take a few days to learn how to use new computer technology. But a company’s ability to fight this attitude is usually reflected in its success. Leading companies realize the importance of taking time off from the normal income-generating work flow to think about the future.”

I didn’t know it at the time, but what I was talking about was a learning organization. I am fortunate that the Memphis District has recognized and taken advantage my abilities. It has allowed me to help the District learn new technology and to do what I enjoy.

The multiple group exercises and following discussions were very intriguing. Early in the week we were frustrated by the group dynamics. Later in the week we learned to take advantage of the individual personalities within a group. I was in a group tasked to develop a process commercial. At first there were only two of us that were volunteered to work on the commercial. The two of us had identical HBDI profiles. We recruited three others with differing personalities. Once we developed a basic concept for the commercial, we began disagreeing with each other real quick. After some tense discussion, we realized that our problem was our differing personalities. We then quickly developed the concept to display words that appealed to each of the four basic personalities. The words were displayed randomly in each of the quadrants and outside a red box. We got several very positive comments about the commercial. This was interesting because we had been told that if you consider all four of the basic personality types projects tend to be more successful.